

# Transactions

Special Awards Issue

OCTOBER 2004

TRANSPORTATION NEWS  
FOR THE NINE-COUNTY  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



## John F. Foran Legislative Award: State Senator Jackie Speier

Throughout a courageous career in public service that spans more than a quarter century, state Senator Jackie Speier has combined both the passion to tackle myriad problems confronting Californians and the tenacity to forge a remarkable record of results. Nowhere is this record more evident than in the field of transportation.

As the tech boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s transformed her San Francisco and San Mateo County district, Speier recognized that generations-old commute patterns were being overturned, and that Peninsula residents were just as likely to travel south to Palo Alto, Mountain View or San Jose — or east across the Bay — as north to San Francisco. Knowing the new alignment would endure even after the high-tech bubble had burst, she set out to find a long-term solution.

The search brought Speier to San Carlos, where she brainstormed with Caltrain staff on how to take fuller advantage of the railroad's more than century-old Peninsula infrastructure to combat congestion on U.S. 101 and Interstate 280. The result was a plan for a modern express rail service carrying commuters long distances both north and south along the Caltrain corridor at speeds faster than driving. Inspired by Japan's famous bullet trains, the idea soon had a name, the Baby Bullet, and Speier had introduced a bill to finance the project with \$127 million in state funds. The plan captured the fancy of then-Governor Gray Davis, who incorporated it into his state-wide Traffic Congestion Relief Program.

Speier's success in propelling the Baby Bullet through Sacramento's political thicket is characteristic of the second-term Democratic senator's entire legislative career. After a 10-year Assembly stint in which two Republican governors signed 181 of her bills into law, Speier in 1999 moved on to the state's upper house, where more than 100 of her bills have been signed into law. As the *San Jose Mercury News* once noted, "No one comes close to Speier's remarkable record of getting substantive legislation signed into law." Born of equal parts passion and persistence, it is this record of achievement that earned Speier this year's John F. Foran Legislative Award.



One of six new Caltrain locomotives prepares to launch a Baby Bullet train on its southward journey from San Francisco to Silicon Valley.

**Grand Award: Caltrain Baby Bullet** Weighing in at more than 400 tons, standing nearly 16 feet tall and immediately capable of racing between the Bay Area's two largest cities in just 57 minutes, the infant delivered by 141-year-old Caltrain in June 2004 is no ordinary baby. It's the Baby Bullet, recipient of this year's Grand Award and the high-speed herald of a new era for weekday commuters from South of Market to the Silicon Valley.

With the new addition to the Caltrain family, passengers now can choose from 86 weekday trains — including 10 Baby Bullet trains which match their siblings' top speed of 79 miles per hour but slash commute times by making only four stops between San Francisco and San Jose: at the Millbrae, Hillsdale, Palo Alto and Mountain View stations (with two morning and two evening runs also stopping at the 22nd Street station in San Francisco).

"The Baby Bullet is a cost-effective way to meet the needs of 21st century commuters by adding value to 19th and 20th century infrastructure," observed former Caltrain executive Howard Goode, who is preparing to retire later this year as deputy executive director of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority. Conceived on a San Carlos tabletop in January 2000 by Goode, state Senator Jackie Speier (winner of this year's MTC Legislative Award — see far left column), and senatorial aide Brian Perkins, the Baby Bullet's gestation was made possible by \$127 million secured by Speier through the state Traffic Congestion Relief Program.

The lion's share of the money was used to help pay for a two-year construction project which included laying bypass tracks in Brisbane and Sunnyvale that allow Baby Bullets to overtake

local trains; installing a centralized switching and signaling system; and making extensive station and track upgrades throughout the corridor. The remaining funding was used to purchase six spanking new gray-and-red locomotives and 17 double-deck passenger coaches. "It's the most expensive baby I ever delivered," joked Speier at the Baby Bullet inauguration gala held on June 7 in San Francisco.

To make the birth of the Baby Bullet as painless as possible, Caltrain opted to work weekends, suspending Saturday and Sunday service from July 2002 to June 2004 to take care of the necessary rail, switching and station work. The result is a Caltrain that's safer, quieter and more reliable than ever. During the 23-month construction period, special bus service was established to transport weekend

riders along the Caltrain corridor.

The Baby Bullet immediately endeared itself to commuters along the Peninsula corridor. Average weekday Caltrain ridership topped 30,000 in August 2004, a 12 percent increase over the August 2003 figure. The upward trend is helping to lift the system out of its post-9/11 ridership doldrums.

Weekend trains returned better than ever after the delivery of the Baby Bullet as well, with new hourly service on both Saturdays and Sundays. Trains previously ran only every two hours on Sundays. To celebrate the return of weekend trains, Caltrain waived fares the first two Saturdays and Sundays in June. Each weekend, more than 20,000 riders took advantage of the free travel opportunity.

In a railroad version of a well-baby checkup, Caltrain in late

2004 will evaluate the new service levels to determine whether the current mix of Baby Bullet, limited-stop and local trains is meeting passengers' expectations. Caltrain aims to add more Baby Bullet service as demand increases and both capital and operating funds become available. The new low-floor Baby Bullet cars carry 130 to 142 passengers, and each Baby Bullet train can accommodate up to 16 bicycles.



State Senator Jackie Speier celebrates the delivery of Caltrain's Baby Bullet at the June ceremony in San Francisco.



## 2004 Transportation Awards: Excellence in Motion

You might think that after more than a quarter century, the pool of nominees for MTC's Transportation Awards Program would start to dry up. Au contraire. The 26th cycle of what is now a biennial competition attracted more than six dozen



The MTC trophy features a ball bearing, a universal symbol of motion.

entries, evidence that there is no shortage of fresh ideas, bold leaders, hardworking agency staff or dedicated volunteers in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Ultimately, the seven-member jury (consisting of three MTC staff, an MTC commissioner and three outside advisors) selected 14 individuals, organizations and projects to honor at this year's September ceremony.

The Grand Award winner proved to be an easy choice — Caltrain's Baby Bullet train clearly stood out in terms of innovation and impact. The jury also recognized seven Merit Award winners. Their ranks include two citizen activists: one who works on several fronts to make bicycles a viable transportation option, and another who has championed the notion of a new transbay commuter rail line.

Among the special award winners is a Caltrans staff member who has given bureaucrats a good name by working his magic behind the scenes to expedite countless essential transportation improvements over the last three decades.

The number of special awards has grown to five thanks to the addition this round of the Miriam Gholikely Award, named for a legendary figure in Bay Area transportation circles. Gholikely triumphed over race, gender and age barriers to become a highly effective advocate



Miriam Gholikely

on behalf of communities of color and elderly and disabled citizens well into her senior years. Over the last two decades, the diminutive powerhouse served on a number of local, state and national panels, becoming a familiar face in the halls of Congress and the California Legislature. She held the unique distinction of being an active member of all three of MTC's citizen advisory panels up until 2003, when she died at the age of 91 after a battle with cancer.

Like Gholikely's contributions, the new award is broad in scope, celebrating extraordinary accomplishments in several fields — community service, volunteerism, advocacy, leadership and minority affairs.



**City CarShare: The Green Way to Go**

Try this short exercise in car-ownership math: Add up the cost of your vehicle, your insurance and maintenance costs, gasoline and parking fees, and divide it by the amount of time you actually spend driving. It may not be worth it when you consider that you could be behind the wheel of one of City CarShare's trademark lime-green Beetles, paying only \$2 to \$4 per hour and 44 cents per mile, reducing your impact on the environment and supporting an organization committed to social change.

Over the past three years, the nonprofit agency has launched a network of shared vehicles that its 3,000 members can use as their own, paying only on a per-use basis. The fleet of over 75 late-model vehicles — Volkswagen Beetles, Golfs and Jettas, Honda Civics, Toyota Scions and Tacoma trucks — is scattered at nearly 40 Bay Area locations that are easily accessible by public transit. “One of the things we are excited about is working with the transit agencies to integrate car sharing and transit,” said Larry Magid, City CarShare's executive director. “Members can take BART across the Bay, pick up a car at an East Bay station and get to their destination, and in that way we are extending the reach of transit.”

Membership is booming and City CarShare is now the largest nonprofit car-sharing organization in the United States. A recent University of California at Berkeley study shows that City CarShare members removed 700 cars from crowded city streets and Bay Area highways in the program's first year, a major factor in the jury's recognition of the organization with an Award of Merit.



*Known for its distinctive lime-green Beetles, City CarShare has added trucks and even hybrid vehicles to its fleet.*

The nonprofit recently launched an innovative partnership with the city of Berkeley wherein the city will retire 15 of its fleet vehicles and replace them with five City CarShare hybrid cars. The hybrids will be reserved for city use during business hours — saving the city an estimated \$400,000 over the first three years — and will be available to regular members at night and during weekends.

A grant from MTC's Low Income Flexible Transportation (LIFT) Program has helped City CarShare expand its fleet in low-income neighborhoods and offer discounted memberships to people transitioning off of welfare. “This gives people access to vehicles that they normally wouldn't be able to afford,” said Magid.



*Bicycles on transit are a passion for full-time advocate Robert Raburn.*

**Robert Raburn: Getting the Bay Area Into Gear**

In 1990, after a decade of driving on Interstate 880 from Oakland to San Jose State to teach courses related to conservation, Robert Raburn thought seriously about his commute and determined it was time for a change. He decided to rearrange his lifestyle to become a bicycle commuter. In the same year he began a professional collaboration with the nonprofit East Bay Bicycle Coalition (EBBC). Today he is the EBBC's unpaid executive director, advocating tirelessly for improved conditions for cyclists, increased bridge access, the closure of critical gaps in the bicycle lane network, and secure bike parking facilities in Oakland and other East Bay cities.

Thanks in no small part to the EBBC and Raburn, AC Transit now provides bike racks on nearly all of its buses. The EBBC also helped launch the Bikes on BART program and the Bay Area bridges' bicycle shuttles, and created a series of East Bay bicycle route maps. Raburn's goal is to incorporate bicy-

cle and pedestrian access into all transportation projects, and to expand upon the “Safe Routes to Transit” projects identified in the recently approved Regional Measure 2 ballot measure. He believes bicycle ridership will swell thanks to rising oil prices, and he's working hard to have a bicycle-mode strategy ready to implement.

Raburn practices what he preaches.

In place of driving, he pedals a touring bike equipped with a rack, saddlebags and lights. And he has a bike trailer big enough to haul a ladder, windsurf board or even a four-drawer file cabinet. In 2001 he sold his car and now uses City CarShare (see above) when he needs an automobile.

Rick Rickard, EBBC board member, described the Award of Merit winner: “If there is one word for Robert, it is 'passion.' He gets really excited about issues like Measure 2 and works on them incessantly. The rest of us are volunteers and we do our bit and go on. But Robert is the thread that ties it all together. He carries the intensity around the issue.”

**David Tannehill Special Employee Award: Annette Williams**

The seventh-largest public transit system in the country, the San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) serves roughly 700,000 customers every weekday, many of whom are seniors or members of the disabled community. Under the leadership of Annette Williams, Muni's Accessible Services Program ensures that the special needs of these riders are met and their concerns incorporated into plans and programs. With the David Tannehill Special Employee Award, MTC recognized Williams for her commitment to accessibility and to mobility with dignity.

Williams has worked in the field of accessible transportation with Muni for over 20 years, and has excelled as manager of the Accessible Services Program for the past 12 years. “It comes down to getting on the bus and seeing two wheelchair users there and being wowed,” said Williams. “Our work has affected their daily lives!”

Under her leadership Muni has implemented an innovative taxi-based paratransit service that provides over a million trips annually to Muni customers; put into service a groundbreaking paratransit debit card project to replace scrip as a fare collection mechanism for the paratransit taxi service; developed boarding platforms to make their historic F line streetcars accessible; and achieved wheelchair accessibility on 97 percent of the city's bus lines.

“Being able to get around town without a car keeps me in San Francisco,” said accessible transit advocate John Cailleau. “If it weren't for Muni I'd be out of here! There is no other city that has the degree of accessibility that Muni provides.”



*Annette Williams found a way to engineer accessibility into San Francisco's historic F streetcar line.*

**David Tannehill Special Employee Award: Sherrie Barnes**

Transporting special education students, many of them severely disabled, to and from schools around the East Bay is not a job for the faint of heart. It's a job for Sherrie Barnes, a driver for Durham School Services whose heart is as big as a bus and every bit as strong as the challenges facing her passengers.

What sets Barnes apart is her dedication to a code of courtesy, professionalism and punctuality — traits that have earned her the David Tannehill Special Employee Award. Barnes demands — and receives — the same courtesy from her passengers. “The most satisfying part of the job is getting to help the kids learn respectful behavior,” she said.

This emphasis on proper behavior does not make Barnes an aloof taskmaster, however. “Every morning, Sherrie indulged my son in an exchange of hugs,” recalled Anna Lisa Fear, whose autistic 9-year-old son traveled with Barnes from his Oakland home to school in Alameda during the 2003–04 school year. “Once that ceremony was completed, he'd gleefully skip to his seat, buckle up and sit quietly all the way to school.”

Sherrie's affection springs from a deep empathy for her special passengers. Her own 2-year-old son is developmentally delayed and receives services through the Regional Center for the East Bay. “You have to be like a guardian angel,” she said.

Barnes began driving for Durham after working as a preschool teacher for five years. Initially intending to spend her workdays with other adults, some introspection led Barnes to climb behind the wheel. “I came to realize,” she said, “that I've been called to work with children.”



*School bus driver Sherrie Barnes treats her young charges with equal measures of respect and tender loving care.*

**Miriam Gholikely Award: H. Welton Flynn**

H. Welton Flynn has been improving public transportation in San Francisco longer than many of us have been riding it. After providing more than 34 years of leadership for the San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni), Flynn retired from public service in April of 2004. The lifelong transportation trailblazer received MTC's inaugural Miriam Gholikely Award (see the related story in the far-right column on page 1).

Flynn started breaking barriers early in his career. With his appointment to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (which then oversaw Muni) in September 1970, Flynn became the first African-American appointed to a San Francisco city commission. He then served six terms as president and remained on the commission until 1991. Because of his leadership skills and his many years of experience in overseeing Muni, Flynn was appointed by then-Mayor Willie Brown to the Public Transportation Commission in 1996, and became the first chairman of the Municipal Transportation Agency in 2000.

Among Flynn's many accomplishments during his years of public service was his role in establishing affirmative action programs for women and minorities in city employment and enabling more women-owned and minority-owned firms to obtain city contracts, an effort that included the hiring of the first African-American general manager for Muni, Curtis E. Green, Senior.

Under Flynn's leadership, Muni launched transit passes for convenient service starting in 1974, created its accessible services program in 1979, restructured major routes and schedules for better transit service in 1979–83, introduced Muni Metro service in 1980–82, rehabilitated the cable car system in 1982–84, and began the Third Street Light Rail Project that is still under way.

According to San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, “Mr. Flynn has been a crucial force for more than three decades in providing residents of and visitors to San Francisco with one of the best public transportation systems in the nation.”



*H. Welton Flynn presided over more than three decades of growth and innovation at San Francisco Muni.*

**Greta Ericson Distinguished Service Award: Rich Monroe**

Rich Monroe is Caltrans District 4's Local Assistance Chief, and although most people will never hear his name, his work touches nearly every person traveling in or through the Bay Area.

Over \$500 million in state and federal transportation funding is committed to projects throughout the Bay Area every year. With those public funds come pre-award audits, field reviews, design standards, environmental clearances and accessibility requirements — all as funding deadlines loom. Monroe and the Caltrans Office of Local Assistance are key to supporting project sponsors through this onerous federal-aid process and delivering transportation projects on time. “My early years spent in my parents' hardware store taught me how to let people with problems walk out with solutions,” said Monroe. It is this approach to life that has earned him the Greta Ericson Distinguished Service Award.

Frank Furger, deputy director of the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency, described working with Monroe: “We always know we are going to get a swift, direct and correct response to questions or issues on project delivery, whether it be a simple overlay or a complex transit village project. Whether it is finding out where a project's environmental document is in the review process, or managing to get a flood of requests processed by the end of the fiscal year, Rich Monroe always gets it done.”

Monroe has been part of District 4's Office of Local Assistance for the past 30 years, rising from a junior engineer to his current position as chief, which he has held for the last seven years and from which he will retire in December 2004. During this time, District 4's Office of Local Assistance has successfully spent over \$5 billion in federal and state aid, and has awarded more than 4,000 construction contracts of all sizes. Notable projects include the Golden Gate Bridge deck replacement and seismic retrofit, reconstruction of San Francisco's earthquake-damaged Embarcadero roadway, Berkeley's University Avenue bike/pedestrian bridge, Santa Clara County's SMART corridor traffic management system, Napa's Maxwell Bridge replacement and, currently, BART's seismic retrofit program.

“It's quite a challenge,” said Monroe, “because there are over one hundred agencies with at least one hundred different ways to do the same thing.” The Berkeley bicycle/pedestrian bridge, for instance, had multiple funding sources each with its own criteria.

“Rich visits projects on his own time during the evenings and weekends to expedite reviews,” said Marcella Rensi, principal transportation planner with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. “Despite a heavy workload and diminishing resources, he still makes himself available whenever he is needed. He wants projects and people to succeed.”

**Doris W. Kahn Accessible Transportation Award: Barbara Rhodes**

*Barbara Rhodes travels widely around the region in her mission to improve transit access for elderly and disabled riders.*

MTC's Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee — which she joined in 1991 as a founding member — as well as the Valley Transportation Authority's Committee for Transit Accessibility and Caltrain's Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Even when serving organizations with broader missions, such as the California Council of the Blind, the Silicon Valley Council of the Blind and the San Jose Disability Advisory Commission, she has gravitated toward transportation issues.

Rhodes has carved out a niche as a technology buff, recently advising MTC on accessibility issues surrounding the development of the TransLink® smart-card fare system and the agency's Web-based interactive transit trip planner.

“When the system is easier for me to use, I know I'm helping other people too, and that's what I enjoy doing — trying to make things user-friendly for everyone,” Rhodes said.



*When completed, the San Francisco Bay Trail will stretch nearly 500 miles and connect the shorelines of all nine Bay Area counties.*

**The San Francisco Bay Trail Project: Halfway There and Growing**

If you ever have walked across the Golden Gate Bridge, fished off the rocks in Emeryville, roller-skated along San Francisco's Embarcadero to Pier 39, flown a kite on the waterfront in Tiburon, hiked through the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Fremont or taken a Sunday family excursion along the Carquinez Strait, you have enjoyed the San Francisco Bay Trail.

Now these Bay Area landmarks are being linked by an ever-growing system of pedestrian and bicycle trails that, when complete, will encircle San Francisco and San Pablo bays. The Bay Trail will connect the shorelines of all nine Bay Area counties, link 47 cities and cross many of the region's toll bridges. The Bay Trail Project was recognized with an Award of Merit for reaching the momentous halfway mark towards completion — over 250 of the eventual 500 miles are now finished.

The Bay Trail Project is a nonprofit organization administered by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). “Any long distance trail requires both inspiration and

perspiration — a good idea and dedicated effort and ongoing commitment,” said ABAG Planning Director Janet McBride. “Cities, state and regional agencies, park districts, and local advocates can be justifiably proud of the progress to date on the Bay Trail. And as each new segment opens, more of the trail is connected and the utility of the whole network increases.”

Recently completed sections of the trail include a segment of walkway and jogging path along Interstate 80 in Berkeley that improves access to the Berkeley shoreline and links to Eastshore State Park, and paths through Oyster Point Marina in South San Francisco. Paralleling the physical construction of the trail is ABAG's effort to artfully publicize and promote its usage with six new maps available for sale, detailing different sections of the trail and offering route guides and access information.

“Seven million people live in this region and there's one thing that all of us share: We all live in a county that touches the Bay,” said McBride. “It is the one thing that defines us as a region. The Bay Trail gives us an opportunity to get close to the Bay and thereby come to appreciate it.”



*Jim Bigelow trained his sights on rehabilitating the Dumbarton Rail Bridge for commuter rail service.*

**Jim Bigelow: Restoring a Rail Connection**

Some people look at the Dumbarton Rail Bridge and see a fire-damaged hunk of wood and metal; Peninsula resident and Award of Merit-winner Jim Bigelow sees a sleek new train system. As long ago as 1987, Bigelow was working with elected officials and members of the business community to advocate for a commuter rail link between East Bay bedroom communities and Peninsula jobs. “With the rail line next to the Dumbarton Bridge, it was a natural to start thinking about getting that reactivated and making it a transit corridor to help out with the east-west commute, which was really not served by major transit,” said Bigelow.

It has taken perseverance, but today the partnership of transit agencies, advocates and officials who agree with Bigelow is proud to see the \$300 million project fully

funded, in part by the recently passed Regional Measure 2 bridge toll hike. Planning, design and construction are expected to take six years, and revenue service should start in 2010 with six daily trains transporting approximately 4,800 passengers across the Bay.

A revitalized rail corridor will alleviate traffic congestion on the Dumbarton Bridge and improve regional connectivity. Com-

muter train service eventually will link Caltrain to the Capitol Corridor rail line to Sacramento, as well as the Altamont Commuter Express to the Central Valley and BART in the East

Bay. According to Howard Goode, San Mateo County Transportation Authority deputy executive director, “Jim Bigelow was the driving force that kept things going. In a world where there are lots of issues competing for your attention, Jim is very effective at reminding you that Dumbarton is an important one and that we should be going to the next step.”





**Alfred Zampa Memorial Bridge: Teamwork Engineers a Marvel**

A new landmark for the San Francisco Bay Area made its grand debut last autumn. The first major suspension bridge to be built in the United States in 30 years — and the first in California since the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge were completed in 1936 and 1937 respectively — the new westbound span of the Carquinez Bridge opened in November 2003 amidst a fanfare of speakers, parades and fireworks. A modern interpretation of a classic suspension span, the bridge was named for the late Alfred Zampa, a local ironworker who helped build the original 1927 Carquinez Bridge, as well as the parallel 1958 span and four other Bay Area toll bridges.

“The building of any edifice is not just about steel and concrete,” said Bart Ney, Caltrans public information officer. “It’s also about



BILL WALL, CALTRANS

*The opening of the Alfred Zampa Memorial Bridge heralds a new era for travelers across the Carquinez Strait.*

dedicated men and women working as a team: designers, architects, engineers, construction workers and townspeople who share a vision.” With this Award of Merit, MTC celebrates the Zampa Bridge as an achievement in engineering and honors the team of people who made it a reality.

The bridge carries three lanes of Interstate 80 traffic and features two 10-foot-wide shoulders to ease the clearing of stalls and accidents. The new span also provides ped-

estrians and bicyclists with a link between Contra Costa and Solano counties: a dedicated path that opened in the spring of 2004.

MTC also honored a handsome book, *Spanning the Carquinez Strait: The Alfred Zampa Memorial Bridge*, that documents in both photos and text the design and construction of the bridge, and includes a short history of the first Carquinez Bridge as well as a biographical sketch of Alfred Zampa. This book, like the bridge, will remain a resource for many years to come.



**Tiny Tickets: Big Impact**

A ticket for a cure. A ticket for an education. A ticket for a meal. A ticket for a rescue. Since 2002, thousands of tiny BART tickets that otherwise would have wound up in the garbage or wedged deep in a drawer have been turned into donations that improve the quality of life in the Bay Area. Founded as a partnership between BART and the East Bay Community Foun-

dation (EBCF) in 2002, the Tiny Tickets Program urges BART patrons to put their tickets with small remaining values to good use by donating them, and encourages local nonprofit organizations to raise funds by collecting these tickets.

“Most of these tickets only have 5 or 10 cents on them, maybe 50 cents, and they’re really not of much value to the customer,” said Carol Wallb, BART’s manager of Customer Services. “But in total, they add up to a fair amount of money. There’s anywhere from \$200,000 to \$1 million of these residual tiny tickets out there at any time.”

BART promotes the Merit Award-winning program in newsletters, posters and on its Web site. EBCF collects tickets from nonprofits on a quarterly cycle and turns them in to BART for redemp-

tion. The nonprofits can choose whether they would like cash or BART tickets in exchange. From April 2002 until December 2003, more than 115 Bay Area nonprofits turned 88,000 Tiny Tickets into nearly \$60,000 in cash for community programs.

“This is an easy way for transit riders to aid many worthy nonprofits and their clients,” said MTC Senior Public Information Officer Ellen Griffin. Participating nonprofits serve a range of interests, including schools, libraries, shelters and environmental groups. Girls Inc. in Contra Costa County traded its tiny tickets for 100 BART youth passes for summer program field trips, while Family Bridges in Oakland garnered over \$700 worth of senior BART tickets to enhance its programs serving Oakland’s Chinese community.



**AC Transit Rapid Bus and East Bay SMART Corridors Program: Relief for Traffic-Clogged San Pablo Corridor**

The East Bay SMART Corridors Program and AC Transit’s new 72R Rapid Bus Line are delivering a one-two punch in the battle against traffic congestion along the 14-mile San Pablo Avenue corridor — running parallel to Interstate 80 from the city of San Pablo to Oakland. Both programs were recognized by

MTC with an Award of Merit. Fully operational as of May 2004, the SMART Corridors Program has deployed \$20 million in intelligent transportation tools, including traffic cameras at key intersections that feed live images to a Web site for the public. The effort, also in place along arterial routes parallel to Interstate 880 in Alameda County, is being led by the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency in partnership with some two dozen other agencies. Operation and maintenance will cost less than \$2 million annually.

Meanwhile, AC Transit has transformed a commute line along the San Pablo corridor into an all-day Rapid Bus route that cuts through traffic. The service uses a new breed of European low-floor buses that speed boardings for all passengers, including wheelchair users. Signal-

preemption equipment — which interacts with the SMART Corridor technology to prolong green lights and shorten red lights — helps speed the buses through intersections. (Emergency vehicles likewise can make use of the corridor’s signal-preemption features.) And, to take the guesswork and anxiety out of waiting, AC has been installing electronic signs at bus stops that announce the estimated arrival of the next bus.

In May 2004, AC reported a striking 66 percent jump in daily ridership during peak periods compared to the limited-stop service it replaced nine months earlier. The route is 20 percent faster than local service and 17 percent quicker than the previous limited service, cutting the average trip by 12 minutes.

“These two programs show what you can do to make the most out of existing infrastructure, and they are innovative in that they rely not on costly and time-consuming road widenings or rail projects. Instead, they use technology to add capacity and efficiency to what is already in place,” noted MTC Legislation and Public Affairs Manager Randy Rentschler.



JOHN BENSON

*AC Transit’s Rapid Bus (Line 72R) is the “smart” new way to travel the San Pablo Avenue corridor.*

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**Metropolitan Transportation Commission**  
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, California 94607

510.464.7700 TEL.  
510.464.7769 TDD/TTY  
510.464.7848 FAX  
info@mtc.ca.gov E-MAIL  
www.mtc.ca.gov WEB

**Steve Heminger**  
*Executive Director*

**Ann Flemer**  
*Deputy Director, Operations*

**Therese W. McMillan**  
*Deputy Director, Policy*

**Randy Rentschler**  
*Manager, Legislation and Public Affairs*

**Catalina Alvarado, Karin Betts, Joe Curley, John Goodwin, Ellen Griffin, Brenda Kahn**  
*Editorial Staff*

**Finger Design Associates, Oakland**  
*Design and Production*

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